UNITED
NATIONS

E

Economic and Social
Council

Distr.
GENERAL

E/ECE/1300
11 March 1994

ENGLISH
Original: ENGLISH/FRENCH

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE
Forty-ninth session
(Provisional agenda item 6 (a))

CONSULTATIONS HELD BY THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE COMMISSION WITH THE BUREAUX OR THE CHAIRPERSONS OF THE PRINCIPAL SUBSIDIARY BODIES AND THE WORKING PARTIES REPORTING DIRECTLY TO THE COMMISSION

(decision B (47), paragraph 4)

Report by the Chairperson of the Commission

GE.94-20796 (E)

Table

Date	Subsidiary Body	Bureaux C: Chairperson fC: former Chairperson V-C: Vice-Chairperson		Country
13 May 1993	Working Party on Standardization Policies (later referred to as **STAND**)	C: V-C:	Mr. S. Warshaw Mr. S. Averin	United States Russian Federation
7 June 1993	Senior Economic Advisers to ECE Governments (**EC.AD**)	C: V-C:	Mr. M. Cosea Mr. J.P. Pagé	Romania France
17 June 1993	Conference of European Statisticians (**CES**)	C: fC:	Mr. I. Felliegi Mr. C. Malaguerra	Canada Switzerland
22 September 1993	Committee on Human Settlements (**HBP**)	C: V-C: V-C: V-C: V-C:	Mr. J. Tutenuit Ms. H. Zaniewska Mr. P. Gurtner Mr. L. Karlberg Ms. M. Paumen	France Poland Switzerland Sweden United States
24 September 1993	Working Party on Facilitation of International Trade Procedures (**TRADE/WP.4**)	C WP.4: C GE.1: V-C GE.1 C GE.2: V-C GE.2	Mr. T. Blomfeldt Mr. R. Walker Mrs. Willenz-Gardner Mr. E. Goffin Mr. D. Dima	Finland United Kingdom United States Belgium Romania
8 October 1993	Working Party on the Chemical Industry (**CHEM**)	C: V-C:	Mr. V. Kamenicky Mr. J. Coupek	United States Czech Republic
20 October 1993	Working Party on Steel (**STEEL**)	C: V-C:	Mr. J. Borák Mr. U. Meiswinkel	Czech Republic Germany

Date	Subsidiary Body	Bureaux C: Chairperson fC: former Chairperson V-C: Vice-Chairperson		Country
11 November 1993	Committee on Energy (**ENERGY**)	C: V-C:	Mr. I. Szergenyi Mr. A. Gritsenko	Hungary Russian Federation
14 December 1993	Committee on Agriculture (**AGRI**)	V-C:	Mr. K. Hirsch	Germany
12 January 1994	Senior Advisers to ECE Governments on Environmental and Water Problems (**ENVWA**)	C: V-C: V-C: V-C: V-C: V-C:	Mr. K. Bärlund Mr. W. Kakebeeke Mr. V. Kostin Mr. C. Ferguson Mrs. B. Quincy Mr. I. Tokes	Finland Netherlands Russian Federation Canada France Hungary
21 January 1994	Inland Transport Committee (**TRANS**)	C: V-C:	Mr. D. Valasek Mr. Silva Rodrigues	Czech Republic Portugal
24 January 1994	Timber Committee (**TIM**)	C:	Mr. D. Lipman	Russian Federation
3 March 1994	Committee on the Development of Trade (**TRADE**)	C: V-C:	Mr. J. Suchman Mr. J. de Laurentis	Czech Republic United States

1. At its forty-seventh session, in decision B (47), the Commission invited the Chairperson of the Commission, together with the Executive Secretary, to arrange consultations with the Bureaux or the Chairpersons of the Principal Subsidiary Bodies and the Working Parties reporting back to the Commission, in order to identify difficulties in the implementation of their work programmes and to facilitate the further streamlining of their activities, so as to ensure the most efficient use of existing resources; and also invited the Chairperson of the Commission to report at Ad Hoc informal meetings the results of the consultations and to suggest, whenever appropriate, practical proposals for consideration by member countries, by the secretariat and by Principal Subsidiary Bodies and the Working Parties reporting directly to the Commission.

2. In order to take account of the interest expressed with the Bureaux itself and to reflect the new circumstances which had led to its extension, it was decided that the consultations would be chaired by either the Chairperson or one of the Vice-Chairpersons. It would be the Chairperson's task to draft the report so as to reflect and preserve the consistency of the consultations.

3. Following the resignation of Mr. Miyet (France) as Chairperson of the Commission, followed by the election to that post of Mr. Dembinsky (Poland), the Chairperson from France held eight consultations between April 1993 and November 1993 and the Chairperson from Poland, five consultations between December 1993 and March 1994. A summary of the meetings can be found annexed to this report.

4. The eminent persons and Bureaux consulted considered such discussions extremely useful both as a means of exchanging information and for stimulating thinking generally, and hoped that they would become the rule within the Commission.

5. The report is necessarily and deliberately concise since it did not seem appropriate to reproduce the accounts already given by the outgoing Chairperson (document E/ECE/1282) and the secretariat (document E/ECE/1283).

A. Recurring topics

6. A number of questions resurfaced at each consultation. They may be grouped under four headings, for convenience, although they overlap to some extent.

7. Methods of work: Decision 0 (45) imposed constraints on the organization and length of meetings. Forced to choose, some subsidiary bodies opted for a drastic cut in their programme of work, while others decided to hold informal meetings in English without interpretation, in a departure from and breach of the rules of procedure of the Economic Commission for Europe (rule 40).

8. The secretariat for its part is having to deal with growing demand due to an increase in the number of member States, and growing sophistication in the topics discussed just as the recruitment freeze took effect. Together, these adverse factors prevent the Economic Commission for Europe from performing its role properly.

9. The problem of resources came up regularly. In recent months, the distribution of budgetary information to member States has been well regarded. The drive for transparency, which should also apply to the Trust Fund, should continue.

10. The question of priorities was a recurring topic in the consultations. Obviously, against a background of scarce financial resources, the priorities set out in 1990 enable problems to be targeted and ranked. But as problems evolve and pass, changes dictated by ECE's mandate and aims will have to be made.

11. Coordination was a key word, whatever the area in question - coordination within the secretariat, coordination between the subsidiary bodies of ECE and other competent international organizations, etc.

12. As regards the first point, a start has been made but there is still much to be done. Without going into details, it will be observed, for example, that statistics are kept by some divisions, in parallel with the Statistical Division, which may be a waste of time and effort.

13. Coordination with other international organizations was regarded as satisfactory. In several cases, the secretariat has devised means of maintaining harmony between institutions of equal authority operating in the same sphere (memorandum of understanding between the Working Party on Facilitation of International Trade Procedures (WP.4) and the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), for example).

14. Workshops were thought useful. Mounting a workshop means organizing a meeting on a given topic in a host country. The cost to ECE is low, but the results do have to be regularly assessed.

B. Value-added

15. The consultations showed the regard in which member States hold the Economic Commission for Europe. The eminent persons consulted stressed a number of advantages of ECE over other bodies:

ECE, set up 46 years ago, is the only permanent cooperative body where all European countries are represented on an equal footing and multilateral cooperation projects are carried out on a European scale (transport, environment, energy, etc.).

It provides a forum for exchanges of information in which representatives of professional bodies take an interest (e.g. Timber Committee, Working Party on the Construction of Vehicles (WP.29)).

It prepares and distributes advanced and highly technical studies covering a whole country or the entire region (e.g. Economic Bulletin for Europe).

Through its regulatory activity, it helps to integrate the countries of the region and coordinate their policies.

C. The consultations chaired by France

I. Working Party on Standardization Policies

16. The Chairperson held his first consultative meeting with one of the Principal Subsidiary Bodies.

17. The Chairperson of the Bureau, Mr. WARSHAW, gave the Party good marks, saying that what it did was useful and not a great burden on ECE finances, given its consensual and "notarial" nature.

18. More generally, ECE served a useful purpose: a standardization policy, provided that it received the necessary attention, would encourage the economies of the eastern countries to adjust and thus help them to integrate into the world economy. From that point of view, ECE was an efficient instrument of cooperation.

19. ECE would benefit from publicizing its work by distributing documentation to the non-European countries which were already playing or would play an important role in world or regional trade (Japan, Australia, India, Brazil). The secretariat suggested that a brochure written in language more suited to the public at large should be issued to address the recurring problem of communication. [This was done, and the brochure appeared in January 1994.]

20. The Russian Vice-Chairperson referred to the need to train standardization trainers for the central and eastern European countries.

21. According to Mr. WARSHAW, the Working Party's activities were fully coordinated with the secretariat's other activities (agriculture, energy and trade) and the problem of duplication with other United Nations institutions (e.g. GATT) did not arise.

22. In conclusion, a change of image would give ECE a new breath of life; having been a political body during the East/West confrontation, it could now justify its presence by its technical competence in areas where its value-added needed no further demonstration.

23. A draft conclusion on "methodology in testing" was to be adopted at the forty-ninth annual meeting, and could serve as a model for resolutions on the subject by the competent bodies.

II. Senior Economic Advisers to ECE Governments

24. The following topics were discussed:

25. The specific nature of ECE compared with other more specialized bodies (IMF, OECD) was recognized by the Chairperson from Romania. Unlike Bretton Woods-type organizations, which had an ideological slant, ECE was given credit for the quality and impartiality of its work. This viewpoint of a country in transition was shared by the Vice-Chairperson (France). The work and discussions which took place on a basis of strict equality among member States did not duplicate what was done at other international

institutions. From this point of view, the CSCE Economic Forum could not match ECE. Participants were unanimous that ECE was the only body to provide a full diagnosis on a European scale (Economic Survey of Europe).

26. The symbiosis between member States and the Commission through the medium of the Committees was excellent. International cooperation was considered to be good following the creation of the Joint Working Group (Joint Working Group on Environment and Economics). The Committee's economic analyses (particularly its projections, resumed after a lapse of five years) were used by other bodies as guidelines. The reply to the question whether participation by the Economic Advisers in the work of the other committees could be expected must be negative because the secretariat and the member States lacked the means; with regard to this last point, the recurring issue of travel expenses remained pending.

27. The quality of the documentation provided by the secretariat was considered good, even excellent given its modest resources. The Economic Survey of Europe was excellent value for money. While OECD had access to a Centre for Cooperation with European Economies in Transition (CCEET), and could bring in three experts, for the case of, say, Romania, ECE was largely deprived of resources. It was obvious that for work of equal quality there was a great disparity of means between institutions.

28. Should cooperation with other institutions be strengthened? The answer was clear. OECD, IMF and EBRD sent representatives to the meetings, and ECE for its part was participating in the Prague exercise. Should a link be established with the CSCE Forum? That required thought. Sweden, currently chairing CSCE, had already provided a partial reply since it intended to arrange a joint seminar with ECE.

29. What type of work was the most efficient? The Chairperson considered that, beyond the annual meeting of the Advisers, workshops were a useful means of passing on knowledge. Workshops meant that the host State paid. The organization and financing of workshops by the central and eastern European countries bore witness to the usefulness of this type of seminar.

30. The mandate of the Advisers was considered to be in keeping with their duties. ECE was a body for analysis and suggestions. From that point of view its terms of reference, as amended in 1991, answered the purpose.

III. Conference of European Statisticians

31. The discussion concerned the following points:

32. General impression: the Bureau of the Conference drew attention to the quality of the participants and the large number of statements they made. Institutions with activities similar to those of ECE (OECD, EUROSTAT) were introduced and agreed to the joint presentation of an integrated statistics programme. The documentation supplied was of good quality and showed clear improvement; the language was precise and direct. In a sense the Conference had become the coordinating body for coordination.

33. The comparative advantages of ECE were that it was the venue for preparing standards and pooling the expertise of various institutions.

34. The principle of subsidiarity was applied among ECE, EUROSTAT and OECD in order to avoid any overlapping of work.

35. The problem of coordination within the secretariat was once again raised; an official document pointed out that apart from the Statistical Division, each functional division (agriculture, transport, industry and trade) prepared its own statistics. Pooling the data would avoid such duplication and save money. The secretariat was aware of the problem and was envisaging such a solution in due course.

36. Evaluation of statistics: the secretariat recognized that it was impossible to keep to its mandate. The Statistical Division was supposed to sift through 39 publications, three quarters of which came from other divisions; yet an interim report should be ready by the end of September 1994. A table summarizing results of recent work on this evaluation will be submitted to the June 1994 Plenary Session of the Conference.

IV. Committee on Human Settlements

37. The Committee on Human Settlements is operating under a new mandate adopted in 1992. Two working parties (the Working Party on Housing, Modernization and Management and the Working Party on Sustainable Human Settlements Planning) have replaced the former three. The Committee is supposed to reassess the mandates of and appointments to the parties every three years. Did the mandate correspond to the Committee's mission? The Bureau was unanimous in claiming that the new mandate was completely satisfactory since it made it possible to focus on better targeted topics.

38. Second discussion topic: how much cooperation was there between the Committee and other institutions working in parallel on the same subject (UNEP, Habitat, OECD, Council of Europe)? The higher level of participation in the Committee than in the other bodies was proof of its success. Thanks in part to very considerable involvement by member States, cooperation with other institutions was excellent. In order to avoid any risk of duplication, the Bureau participated informally in the work of Habitat II. Joint workshops were organized with Habitat II, the Council of Europe and OECD.

39. The experiment of adoption by session under the report of the previous session had not proved conclusive.

V. Working Party on the Facilitation of International Trade Procedures (WP.4)

40. The consultation took place while the Working Party was considering how well its present mandate matched its mission. EDIFACT had been genuinely successful, as could be seen from the size and quality of the delegations attending what was supposed to be a technical meeting. It had thus made it possible to pinpoint the problems pending.

41. Should WP.4 become a separate Committee? Some delegations had supported the idea at the forty-eighth session of ECE. To take it to its logical conclusion would lead to a split in the International Trade Division of which WP.4 was part. The solution would be to arrange access in the WP.4 Bureau to one of the leading positions on the Committee on the Development of Trade (Chairperson or Vice-Chairperson).

42. It should also be recognized that the problem of status was less crucial than that of resources. The Trade Facilitation Section had sufficient staff (one P5, two P4s, one P3, one P2) and data-processing equipment. The secretariat still needed, however, to continue its efforts to adjust and equip itself.

43. WP.4 worked successfully with other institutions (UNCTAD, ISO).

44. The success of EDIFACT was comparable to that of another group, the Working Party on the Construction of Vehicles (WP.29). It helped to give a regional body (ECE) an incontrovertibly international role.

VI. Working Party on the Chemical Industry

45. The consultations took place on 8 October, at the conclusion of discussions in the Working Party.

46. The Chairperson of the Working Party, Mr. KAMENICKY, stressed the importance of its work. The Party was a unique body where country delegations included Government representatives and delegates from the private sector.

47. For the United States, the Working Party offered considerable value-added, and what was discussed at Geneva was closely followed in Washington. The Annual Review of the Chemical Industry was of international quality.

48. The Vice-Chairperson of the Bureau, Mr. J. COUPEK, on behalf of the countries in transition, stressed the value of the secretariat documentation, in particular the Directory of Chemical Producers and Products.

49. Overall, the Bureau considered that the work the Party did was of excellent quality (it should not be forgotten that the chemical industry accounted for 18 to 20% of the central and eastern European countries' industrial output but was not very visible. One sign of the interest private industrial groups took in the Working Party was the US$ 250,000 paid by Solva (Belgium) to the Trust Fund.

50. The Executive Secretary described the constraints experienced by ECE in general (recruitment freeze) and the Working Party in particular. He took note of the Chairperson's observations on the need for coordination between the Industry and Technology Division and the Statistical Division, in matters such as the collection of data.

51. Several conclusions emerged:

- There was not enough cooperation within the secretariat, as far as the Working Party was concerned.

- Because of inadequate resources, the programme of work was experiencing delays (arrangements for the publication of lists of chemicals manufacturers by a private publisher had still not been settled).

- Despite all those difficulties, the Working Party was a useful forum because it brought together two categories of decision-makers (officials and industrialists). The discussion on the chemical industry centre in Warsaw was ample proof of this.

VII. Working Party on Steel

52. When questioned by the Chairperson, the Bureau of the Working Party on Steel unanimously acknowledged the unique and universal nature of this body.

- It was unique because it did not compete with other institutions working in the same sphere - OECD was a meeting of officials while the International Iron and Steel Institute was composed of private industrialists. The Commission of the European Communities covered a limited geographical area. By bringing together representatives of States and the industrial sector within each delegation, the Working Party did indeed constitute a unique forum.

- It was universal because it provided a venue for meetings of the main steel-producing countries. Japan, Korea and Brazil participated under article XI of the Commission's terms of reference.

53. The Bureau also recognized that ECE was neutral, unlike other bodies.

54. The exchange of opinions concerned:

- Aid to countries in transition: Mr. BOREK thought the exchange of data between developed and central and eastern European countries was a fruitful one and a good basis for aid to countries in transition. Other sectors were also very useful (workshops, study trips).

- Coordination between Working Parties and within the secretariat: The Chairperson considered that better coordination of activities which could be grouped (steel/privatizations) would be desirable, and invited the Bureaux of the Principal Subsidiary Bodies to meet during the forty-eighth session to improve their synergy. The secretariat admitted that as far as it was concerned, coordination (between the Statistical Division and the others) was still not perfect.

- **The vision of ECE: Mr. BOREK regarded attending meetings in Geneva as a tradition. He himself saw ECE in terms of sections and welcomed the Bureau's move to transform the annual session into a meeting between the Chairpersons of the Principal Subsidiary Bodies.**

VIII. Committee on Energy

55. Consultations concerned the following points:

- The programme of work: This raised no particular difficulties. The programme of work should be reinforced by better coordination between the Working Group on Energy and other Principal Subsidiary Bodies of the Commission. Although energy was not a priority sector it was, of course, of crucial importance for many countries and also constituted a focal topic for other areas of ECE activity.

- The creation of a working party on renewable energy would be the subject of a feasibility study to be drafted in close collaboration between Sweden and the secretariat experts. The study should take into account work done in the context of the Framework Convention on Climate Change. The Russian Federation would support that activity by providing relevant information.

56. In so far as the secretariat could be certain that member States would hold to their commitments, the "Energy Efficiency 2000" programme could be continued to its conclusion.

IX. Committee on Agriculture

57. The Bureau stated that the new mandate of the Committee took into consideration the existing division of labour between various international organizations dealing with agriculture in Europe, in particular with FAO. It reflects the needs of the member States resulting from a new situation in Europe and enlarged membership of the Commission.

58. The work programme of the Committee is based on existing priorities of the Commission and comprises: economic analysis of the agricultural sector and agricultural policies, environmental issues and sustainable agriculture, standardization of perishable produce in relation to trade facilitation and agricultural and food statistics. It was stressed that the work programme of the Committee should continue to take due account of specific needs of the countries in transition with emphasis on problems of privatization and agricultural restructuring and policies.

59. It was felt that the impact of the Uruguay Round for agricultural trade of CiTs could be considered by the Committee. The Bureau noted that the Committee on Agriculture should address such trade issues as identification of trade opportunities for the countries in transition, their supply capacity and problems related to financing of trade. The Committee should examine cooperation with the Committee on the Development of Trade and possibly also with the International Trade Centre. It should also continue to organize

workshops and seminars on professional training for countries in transition jointly with ITC and UNCTAD. A closer cooperation with the Commission of European Union in Brussels could also be enhanced.

60. The Bureau stated that the longstanding, institutionally established cooperation with FAO had been strengthened in recent years. Joint FAO-ECE new subsidiary bodies were established in the priority areas with a view to avoiding overlapping and duplication of activities and improving coordination and cooperation.

61. Nevertheless concern was expressed about a very complex and delicate issue with regard to UN/ECE standards for fresh fruit and vegetables and their relationship to the standards of the FAO/WHO Codex Alimentarius Commission, in particular the standards drawn up by the Codex Committee on Tropical Fresh Fruit and Vegetables. The Bureau recalled that the UN/ECE programme on standards for perishable produce had been developed for more than 40 years in close cooperation with OECD and with the strong involvement of the European Community which accepted the ECE standards as the basis for its internal common market. The Bureau welcomed the negotiations under way, between the secretariats, which should aim at avoiding the duplication of work and confusion detrimental to trade that parallel standards would create, and stated that the existing division of labour between Codex and ECE should be maintained.

62. The Bureau expressed the view that the delegations might raise this issue during the forty-ninth session of the Commission. The secretariat was asked to prepare a note on this subject, prior to the session of the Commission.

X. Senior Advisers to ECE Governments on Environmental and Water Problems (SAEWP)

63. The Bureau of the SAEWP stressed the significance of the restructuring of the Senior Advisers' activities undertaken in the light of new political conditions in the ECE region. It provides a unique opportunity for an innovative collective approach to the prevention and solution of environmental problems. It was stated that the common ecological risks and threats our countries were facing might well constitute an integrating factor in our region. The transboundary dimension of most environmental calamities should strengthen the cooperation in this regard.

64. The change in name of the Senior Advisers to the "Committee on Environmental Policy" and new terms of reference would further highlight its role in consolidating regional cooperation on environmental policy issues, particularly in providing a policy direction for the ECE region, preparing ministerial meetings, promoting regional follow-up activities to the UNCED. A need for coordinating environment-related programmes in the region was stressed, in order to minimize the overlapping and duplication of work which still exist in some areas. The importance of programmes implemented by WMO and WHO was mentioned.

65. It was pointed out that extending achievements and agreed practices of other institutions (e.g. European Union, OECD) to the entire ECE region was of great importance. In this context the Senior Advisers' involvement in the

extension of the system of country environmental performance reviews to our region was underlined. This new activity will be undertaken in close cooperation with OECD according to the new mandate and functions of the Senior Advisers. It was recalled that Estonia would be the first country to be reviewed within the ECE mechanism.

66. The particularly important tasks entrusted to the Senior Advisers by the Lucerne Ministerial Conference "Environment for Europe" were emphasized. It was recorded that in response to the Lucerne Declaration an ad hoc Group of Senior Governmental Officials was established by the SAEWP. This Group will act as a central coordinating body for the development of the "Environment for Europe" process. It will oversee the follow-up to the Lucerne Conference and substantive preparations for the next Ministerial Conference to be held in Sofia (Bulgaria) in 1995. It will also develop an Environmental Programme for Europe.

67. Implementation of and compliance with UN/ECE environmental conventions was mentioned as another prominent area of the Senior Advisers' activities. A substantive work programme was focused mainly on the implementation of the 1991 Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context, the 1992 Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Water Courses and International Lakes and the 1992 Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents.

68. The Bureau expressed the view that ongoing cooperation with the European Community (in the implementation of ECE Conventions), OECD (on environment and economics and management of hazardous wastes), UNEP (on improvement of environmental management in countries in transition) and with other international organizations would be strengthened during the preparatory process for the Sofia Ministerial Conference. Understanding and sensitivity on the part of their secretariats were noted in this very context.

69. The Bureau stated that much expectation was being observed in countries in transition as far as assistance and cooperation on environmental issues were concerned. Lack of resources in these countries is imposing serious limitations to the implementation of environmental conventions.

70. In conclusion, it was stated that new terms of reference responded to the specific role of the SAEWP but there was a need for additional secretariat resources for new activities on environmental performance reviews and the "Environment for Europe" process. While the short-term financial support for these resource-demanding activities would be provided by interested member Governments, the Commission and the Executive Secretary were expected to ensure a long-term resource support from the regular budget.

XI. Inland Transport Committee

71. The Bureau stated that the revised terms of reference of the Inland Transport Committee (ITC) corresponded to the needs of member countries resulting from a new economic and political environment in Europe. It pointed out that the five priorities of the ITC programme of work (transport of

dangerous goods, construction of vehicles, road safety, infrastructure and combined transport) covered adequately the most important areas of interest to all ECE member Governments.

72. The Bureau underlined the importance accorded by Transport Ministries of ECE member Governments to the work of the ITC and the key role it plays in the promotion of cooperation in the field of transport in the ECE region. It was confident that the Commission would continue to support its activities with a view to further increasing such role.

73. The Bureau stressed the importance of the achievement of a coherent efficient transport system in the ECE region as an important prerequisite for economic development and integration and emphasized the usefulness of the international agreements and conventions, elaborated and constantly kept under review under the auspices of the Committee, for the achievement of such an objective. The usefulness and importance of such legal instruments had been recognized by the Draft Declaration to be issued by the Second Pan-European Ministerial Transport Conference (Crete, 14-16 March 1994). The Bureau also commented with satisfaction on the continuous increase in the number of Contracting Parties, including new member States, to such legal instruments. In the view of the Bureau, ECE countries which were not yet Contracting Parties to the ECE legal instruments in the field of transport should continue to be invited to accede to them as soon as possible and to implement their provisions.

74. The Bureau reviewed the current work of the ITC particularly in its priority areas, including the updating of the relevant legal instruments. Special mention was made of the international road, rail and combined transport networks, laid down in the relevant infrastructure agreements (AGR, AGC, AGTC) which were being revised with a view to fully taking into account the new political and transport situation in the region. Reference was also made to the work in the field of facilitation of border-crossings, where a new Convention on Customs Treatment of Pool Containers had been finalized and was to be opened to signature on 15 April 1994.

75. The Bureau expressed the feeling of the Committee that the feasibility study on the convening of a regional Conference on Transport and the Environment should select for consideration by such a Conference the areas in which concrete results could reasonably be expected, with emphasis on transport issues. It was recalled that the Conference should be convened under the auspices of the ECE in cooperation with ECMT. It was pointed out that the Committee had approved the setting up of an ad hoc group to assist the secretariat in such task.

76. In respect of the problems experienced on the Danube by the fleets of countries transiting via the territory of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro), the members of the Bureau noted the concern expressed by the Committee and its request to the Commission to consider this question with a view to mitigating the problem.

77. The Bureau also recalled that no consensus had been reached in the Committee regarding the upgrading of the European Provisions concerning the International Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Inland Waterways (ADN) to the status of an Agreement.

78. The Bureau underlined the need for continuation of the Committee's role in providing assistance to countries in transition. Workshops for the analysis of such subjects in the transport sector as privatization, statistics, price setting, were considered to be of great importance. However, the lack of funds prevented Governments from countries in transition from organizing a number of workshops which had been foreseen. The importance of assisting countries concerned in developing the TEM and TER networks was also emphasized and concern was expressed that a new UNDP programme approach had ceased funding of the TEM and TER projects.

79. The Bureau noted that cooperation with other international organizations and fora dealing with transport with a view to avoiding duplication worked satisfactorily.

80. The steps taken to improve the resource situation in the Transport Division were noted. However, a number of vacancies still exist and one post was on loan to another service. Such a situation was considered detrimental to an effective implementation of the work programme of the Committee. The relevant provisions of Commission Decisions O (45) and G (48) were recalled and the Executive Secretary was expected to take further measures aimed at fully normalizing the situation.

81. The Bureau noted with satisfaction the high quality of documents being prepared by the secretariat and its commitment to provide the best possible service to governments in the field of transport.

XII. Timber Committee

82. The revised terms of reference of the Timber Committee duly reflect the current needs of member countries. The Committee's programme of work meets the main interests of member Governments and is being revised in accordance with joint ECE and FAO agreement in the light of UNCED and the Helsinki Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe. Some new elements are being introduced (problems of environment and forests).

83. It was stressed that the Committee in cooperation with FAO was the only source of comparable international statistics, which were the basis of all analysis of international issues in the sector.

84. The intense programme of activities aiming at assisting countries in transition was welcomed, in particular the series of workshops. They were effective and on well chosen subjects. It was stated that the programme had been drawn up after consultation with transition and donor countries and that a team of specialists had been established to monitor the programme. The Bureau was informed that the main problem was lack of resources which did not allow to organize more workshops and prevented delegates from CiTs from attending them.

85. The Committee's work on Chernobyl was welcomed.

86. With regard to the resource problem it was pointed out that member countries should be invited to consider allocating funds from the ECE Trust Fund for countries in transition more flexibly, so that non-priority areas, such as timber, would also have access to these resources.

87. Resource problems are also the major constraint on the implementation of the work programme and the Committee's ability to contribute to the process of follow-up to UNCED and Helsinki. There is a proposal that the Timber Committee session in 1994 would hold a joint session with the FAO European Forestry Commission, in order to prepare a regional contribution on forests and sustainable development as an input to the preparation of the CSD meeting in 1995. This would necessitate extra meeting time, in addition to the Committee's regular allocation (two additional half days of formal session). A request should be submitted to the annual Commission session.

88. Problems of staffing were also taken up.

89. The meeting was also informed that the new International Tropical Timber Agreement provided for the new ITTO to consider world timber markets (i.e. not only tropical) in some respects. There is both a clear danger of duplication and opportunity for strengthening cooperation. It was agreed that the secretariat should explore this question with ITTO and bring the matter to the attention of the Timber Committee in October 1994.

90. In conclusion, it was stated that the Timber Committee as well as the secretariat itself maintained good working relations with FAO.

XIII. Committee on the Development of Trade

91. The Bureau of the Committee commented briefly on the session of the Committee and its programme of work. It was stated that the meeting of the Committee had gone well, in a constructive spirit and many useful, future-oriented comments and suggestions had been made by delegates. Discussions held on the documentation prepared by the secretariat and in particular the major studies on privatization and trade among the countries in transition were considered as a positive sign, supporting the view that the Committee could play a useful role in these areas and that this work should be maintained.

92. It was recalled that delegations from countries in transition had expressed interest to be further assisted by the Committee, within its mandate, in their process of transformation.

93. It was also noted that a number of delegations reiterated their readiness to cooperate with and assist countries undergoing economic reforms. Ambassador Manhusen commented on his question whether the Committee could not play some role in providing interested countries in transition with technical assistance on issues related to negotiating their accession to GATT and the new World Trade Organization. In this context it was also stated that

studies suggested by the secretariat, including that planned for the next round-table on the impact of the successful conclusion of the Uruguay Round on intraregional trade, were helpful for countries in transition.

94. A brief discussion was also held on the draft decision submitted by the delegation of the Russian Federation concerning access to western markets for goods produced in countries in transition. It was noted that so far insufficient support had been given to this proposal.

95. The resources question was also taken up. Ambassador Manhusen noted that there had been a consensus that resources devoted to WP.4 were adequate. He suggested, however, in view of the presentation made by the Chairman of the Working Party on International Contract Practices in Industry (WP.5) to the Committee's session and of the general interest of member Governments in strengthening WP.5, that the Executive Secretary could rearrange resources to meet this request.

96. The Executive Secretary commented on the process of allocating resources to the Trade Committee's priority area: trade facilitation. So far, he said, 25% of Division resources had been moved from non-priority activities to support priority work. It was also said that, provided the present allocation of resources between trade facilitation and development of trade was kept, it would be possible to prepare two major studies for the next session of the Committee. Any further diminution in the resources allocated to non-priority areas would adversely affect the quality of the Committee's work.

97. In concluding the discussion on this item, Ambassador Manhusen reiterated the general view that resources were adequate to carry out the priority activity at this stage and that the Executive Secretary could be asked to ensure that resources were allocated so that the proper balance between the Committee's two activities could be achieved.

- - - - -